



ADAPT

Late Backup

ADAPT'S Comments on NHCD's 2008 Annual Plan

LOW INCOME AFFORDABLE HOUSING & RENTAL SUBSIDIES

Many people with disabilities have extremely limited incomes. A person who receives SSI income from Social Security is getting \$637 per month or \$7,644 per year. The waiting list for Section 8 is currently 4 to 5 years long and is closed -- so no one can get on it until it is opened up again. Public housing is also very limited compared to the need, and the waiting list is over a year. Personal attendants (who help people with disabilities and seniors with personal care and home health care) make about \$13,000 per year if they are lucky. Housing needs to be targeted to rents people can afford. Section 8 and similar rental subsidies are critical for people to keep a roof over their heads. NHCD's projects and programs should target the population of Austinites mentioned above.

BARRIER REMOVAL

There is a significant need for assistance to people with disabilities who need access in their own homes. Inaccessible housing is substandard for people who need access. If you are a prisoner in your own home because you cannot get in or out independently due to lack of a ramp, railing, accessible fire alarm or other access accommodations, your housing is substandard. Support is needed to increase the number of architectural barrier removal programs. These programs must be consumer driven. Technical assistance needs to be provided to communities to help them develop these programs. Funds should be dedicated to support barrier removal programs, and technical assistance should be provided to communities to help them develop consumer driven programs.

SEPARATING SERVICES AND HOUSING

While there is a need for increased housing and support services for people with disabilities, these two should be separated. We do not support housing which is tied to support services. An individual with a disability who is low income may need housing assistance and may also need attendant services, but in order to receive these services this person should not be required to live in a group home or nursing home. People with disabilities want to be part of the community and not indentured to their service providers or isolated in their residences. Housing and support services should be separated.

ENFORCEMENT

The federal Fair Housing Amendments Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and the City of Austin's Building Code all address requirements to make housing and related services accessible for people with disabilities. These laws are often times not followed; if there is no enforcement, compliance is unlikely to occur. The Austin Tenants Council is a very necessary component in enforcement of the above mentioned laws. Over 61% of the ATC decimation complaints from 2007-2008 were based on disability related discrimination.



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Existing and future housing projects should be surveyed to ensure compliance.

BASIC ACCESS/VISITABILITY

In addition to enforcement of existing legislation as a means to battle the lack of access, disability organizations are advocating for a very basic level of access requirements for single family dwellings (and duplexes) developed with public assistance.

Homes built with basic access have enormous appeal for people with and without disabilities. It welcomes friends and family who use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches or their mobility aids. Basic access allows people who experience a temporary disability or decreases mobility due to aging to stay in their home rather than face moving or making major renovations. Basic access provides greater opportunities for builders, architects and realtors to serve a growing market.

Basic access can be achieved simply and inexpensively by incorporating four universal design features into all new construction. The four features are

- One no step entrance (may be in the front, side back or garage entrance)
- Doorways throughout the home at least 32 ins wide; hallways at least 36 ins
- Reinforced walls near the toilet and bathtub so that grab bars may be added, if needed at a later day
- Light switches and electrical controls no higher than 48 ins and electrical plugs no lower than 15 ins above the floor

Such basic access does not significantly increase housing construction costs in the vast majority of cases. People with disabilities and housing advocates should

promote requirements for new housing construction to incorporate these basic access/Visitability features.